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## **Fact Sheet**

# **Montana Wolf Delisting**

### Wolves are Recovered in the Northern Rocky Mountains

- The Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolf population first met the biological recovery goals in 2002. The northern Rockies "metapopulation" is comprised of wolf populations in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. About 1,500 wolves live in the region, where wolves can travel about freely to join existing packs or form new packs. This, combined with wolf populations in Canada and Alaska, assures genetic diversity.
- The decision to remove the wolf from the federal Endangered Species List is scheduled to take effect 30 days after it is published in the Federal Register, but renewed legal challenges are expected.
- Federal rules require Montana to maintain a minimum of 100 wolves and 10 breeding pairs.
- About 420 wolves inhabited Montana in 2007 in about 73 packs, 39 of which were breeding pairs. Preliminary estimates suggest the 2008 population will be about the same as 2007.

### Wolf Delisting and Montana

- FWP and the respective Indian Tribes will have full legal authority for wolf conservation and management in Montana when delisting takes effect.
- Upon delisting, the line separating Montana into the northern Endangered Area and the southern Experimental Area no longer exists.
- The wolf will be reclassified under Montana law as a "species in need of management" statewide.
- Montana laws protect wolves. Wolves can only be legally killed:
  - during an official hunting season authorized by the FWP Commission
  - if the wolf is seen killing or threatening to kill dogs or livestock
  - to protect human life.
  - as authorized by FWP to resolve wolf-livestock conflicts

### Wolf Monitoring

- Throughout the year, FWP determines the status of known packs, verifies new wolf activity, determines if a pack produced pups, and how many survived to the end of the year.
- FWP is required to report the minimum total number of wolves, the number of packs of two or more wolves and the number of breeding pairs to the USFWS for five years after delisting.
- FWP monitors wolves for routine health and disease. FWP also collects tissue samples and uses radio telemetry information to monitor genetic diversity and wolf dispersal.

### Wolves, Livestock and Pets

- Montana livestock producers can non-injuriouly haze or harass a wolf if it is too close to livestock or domestic animals on public or private land. The incident should be reported to FWP in 72 hours.
- Similar to lions and black bears, a wolf seen actively biting, wounding, chasing, harassing, or attacking livestock could be killed on public or private land, as allowed by Montana's defense of property statute. The incident must be reported to FWP in 72 hours.
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- USDA Wildlife Services investigates reports of injured or dead livestock to see if they are wolf-related and carries out both nonlethal and lethal control of wolves at FWP's direction.

### Wolf Hunting Season

- The FWP Commission approved a wolf-hunting season framework that applies to the 2008 and 2009 seasons. A wolf trapping season was not approved for 2008 or 2009.
- A legal challenge to the first delisting effort blocked the 2008 season. A 2009 wolf hunting season could still occur, and FWP will recommend that the FWP Commission establish a 2009 quota. Renewed legal challenges are expected and the timing of actual license sales is unknown.
- Quotas would limit the total number of wolves that could be taken by hunters within each of three wolf management units. Quotas will be tracked by requiring successful hunters to call 1-877-FWP-WILD to report their harvest within 12 hours. When a management unit quota is filled, the season will close upon 24-hour notice.
- The wolf population would be carefully monitored before, during, and after the hunting season to determine how it responds.
- Wolf season dates correspond to Montana's early back country and general big game rifle seasons.

### Cost and Funding

- Montana's conservation and management program is expected to cost about \$1 million a year.
- To fund wolf management, Montana believes continuation of federal funding is critical to the long term success of recovery efforts. Montana will continue efforts to secure federal funding and combine it with revenue from the sale of wolf hunting licenses, private sources, and other in-kind contributions.

### Federal Oversight for Five Years

- Montana must monitor the wolf population and annually submit population status reports to USFWS for five years.
- USFWS will monitor how each state carries out its management plan, regulations, and state laws.
- USFWS will also examine any change in state plans or laws to determine whether it would jeopardize the population and could relist the gray wolf if it finds the changes are significant and could jeopardize Montana's population or the tri-state regional population.

### Wolves Can Be Relisted

- Three scenarios would cause the USFWS to initiate a status review to determine if relisting was warranted:
  - 1) if the wolf population falls below wolf population recovery levels of 100 wolves and 10 breeding pairs in either Montana, Idaho, or Wyoming.
  - 2) if the wolf population in Montana, Idaho, or Wyoming falls below 150 wolves or 15 breeding pairs in any of the states for three consecutive years
  - 3) if a change in state law or management objectives would significantly increase the threat to the wolf population.
- A federal judge or the USFWS could also relist the northern Rocky gray wolf population in response to legal challenges.